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THE MILITARY AND PRIVATE SECRETARIES OF GEORGE WASHINGTON

BY MARY S. BEALL

Thereupon answered John Alden, but looked not up from his writing :
"Truly the breath of the Lord hath slackened the speed of the bullet ;
He in his mercy preserved you to be our shield and our weapon !"

LONGFELLOW.

That Washington ever rehearsed his deeds of daring and hairbreadth escapes to his secretaries after the manner of the doughty Puritan captain would not find credence for a moment, but that his secretaries may often have echoed in thought the sentiments expressed by John Alden is pleasantly shown by scores of letters preserved in the "Washington Correspondence" at the Department of State.

Reared in habits of industry and accustomed to so systematize his work that every detail received its just share of consideration, and believing, to use his own words, that "idleness is disreputable under any circumstances, productive of no good, even when unaccompanied by vicious habits," a large proportion of Washington's military, official, and private correspondence is in his own careful penmanship. Throughout the busy and harassing period of the French and Indian war we find month after month and year after year size-rolls, necessary returns, plans and specifications of forts, arrangement of troops during certain long marches, and other military data all written out by himself, with never a blot and seldom an erasure and in a hand as easy to read as print.

In 1755, however, while for a time he commanded the colonial forces that were building forts, opening roads, and holding in check the French and Indians upon the western frontier of Virginia, he wrote to Governor Dinwiddie from Winchester, October 13 :

"I have appointed Captain George Mercer (whose Seniority entitled him to it) my aid-de-camp; and Mr. Kirkpatrick, of Alexandria, my Secretary; a young man bred to Business, of good Character, well-recommended, and a person whose Abilities I had not the least doubt of."

Mr Kirkpatrick's appointment, however, may have been several months earlier, for on the 19th of August, 1755, he writes to Washington from Williamsburg, acknowledging the receipt of a letter by express and adding:

"By this Muddy Mortall I thought it incumbent to advise you, that I shall be detain'd a Couple of days longer in town, being obliged to leave a Copy of all Accounts as they now have been examined, & Stand stated in Your Book, so that the next Committee will have easy work with you."

A year later we find him writing to his chief from—

"FALMOUTH, 25 August, 1756.

* * * "On Friday evening had the pleasure of receiving yours, and agreeable to your desire copied the Governour's, Deliver'd it and woud have Shown it to the Speaker, had he not left Town that forenoon. * * * You woud learn by Capt. Cox that All your Accts. were pass'd & approved, & that transcribing the whole transactions woud detain me 2 or 3 days after him."

In 1757 he had left the army and resumed his business of shipping merchant in Alexandria, and on the 19th of June writes:

"ALEXANDRIA 19th June 1757.

"DEAR SIR, I share in the anxiety and concern that you must undoubtedly undergo in the precent melancholy prospect and very warmly wish a happy issue. Should my service be requisite in any shape at this juncture, I shall be glad to know it and will immediately obey with the greatest chearfulness in whatever you are pleased to command."

Washington ordered many of the army supplies through him, and in a communication of the 21st of July following, concerning ammunition and artillery stores, after wishing Washington "Every Happiness this Life can afford, or the next can Bestow," he adds:

"P. S. I shall be glad allways to be employed in any thing You have occasion for, this way."

In October, 1757, he writes: "If at any time you desire my assistance, here or elsewhere, before you go down to Williamsbg. I am obedient to your command—and beg you woud use me, without ceremony, in any thing I can serve you."

The next year he determines to visit his native country, and writes to acquaint Washington with his contemplated trip and tell where to direct future letters:

"ALEXANDRIA 3d September 1758.

* * * "A letter will find its way to me—at Kirkcudbright—the County Town of Galloway in the South of Scotland—from whence Doctr. Craik and I derive the *honour* of our Births.—May Providence in a Peculiar manner protect You in every point of Your life and Crown Your Troubles with Content & Honour."

Washington replied promptly, for on the 14th of the same month John Kirkpatrick "snatches a moment before starting" to acknowledge a letter, say good-bye, and beg for a continuance of the correspondence:

"ALEXANDRIA, 14th September, 1758.

* * * "I am touch'd with sincere grief to leave You and a few Friends, whose Intimacy & Friendship have attach'd me with ties of the warmest Affection—and nothing woud make it tolerable without the hopes of Returning, and the pleasure of hearing of my Friends' happiness when Absent—persist then Dear Sir, in kind Offices of Communica-

tion, by all opportunitys—for nothing will afford me more real Delight—or confer greater Honour.”

No matter what the main object of his letters, he always found space to give all the news and often much of the gossip of the neighborhood. During the Revolution he was a patriot and always strongly attached to Washington.

After Washington's marriage, when the Custis children began to need the services of a tutor, we find the name of Walter Magowan, of Maryland occurring in his *Ledger* and *Diary*, and there is reason to believe that Magowan acted also in the capacity of secretary, but documentary evidence is not at hand to prove this surmise. However, it is matter of record that he did copying and was paid extra therefor. In Ledger A his account runs from October 9, 1762, to March, 1768, the date of its settlement. In Ledger C he appears as—

“The Rev'd Mr. Magowan, Dr.

“1773, Jan'y 6. To 12 Tickets in the Delaware Lottery, belonging to Lord Sterl'g
Numb'd from 5264 to 5275 In-
clus'e, @ 10 doll'rs ea. & dis-
pos'd of by you pr. Letter.... £36 0 0

“Cr.

“1775, Jan'y. By your order on Mr. Hectr. Ross
for 120 Dollars..... £36 0 0”

The Rev'd Mr Magowan apologizes in this letter for his delay in settling this account and signs himself “Sir, your obliged h'ble serv't.”

Though Washington's aids-de-camp in the discharge of their office attended to many clerical duties, this paper will treat only of those who appear squarely on the records under the title of *secretary*, and Joseph Reed has the honor of being the first “military secretary to the commander-in-chief,” the following item being included in Washington's general orders for the current date:

“HEADQUARTERS, CAMBRIDGE, *July 4th, 1775.*

* * * * *

“Joseph Reed Esqr. is appointed Secretary to the General and he is in future to be consider'd and regarded as such.”

Joseph Reed, the son of Andrew Reed and Theodosia Bowes, was born at Trenton, New Jersey, on the 27th of August, 1741. His education, begun at the Philadelphia academy, was continued at Princeton college, where, in 1757, he took his bachelor's degree at the early age of 16, delivering an original Latin oration at the commencement exercises. After studying law and being admitted to practice, he went to England to complete his legal studies in the Middle Temple, London. His marriage with Esther De Berdt, only daughter of Dennis De Berdt, colonial agent for Massachusetts, allied him with some influential English families. Returning to this country in 1770, he settled in Philadelphia and began the practice of the law.

Already the colonies were beginning to chafe under the injustice and short-sighted policy of the mother country. Reed, taking an active part in politics, began, through his English connections, an earnest, fearless correspondence with Lord Dartmouth, the colonial secretary, giving the British ministry timely warning of what the end must be should the growing dissatisfaction in the American colonies lead to open revolt and an armed resistance. In 1774 he was elected member of the committee of correspondence, and president of the first Pennsylvania convention in January of 1775. In the following May, while a delegate to the First Continental Congress, began probably that acquaintance with Washington, then a delegate from Virginia, which led to Reed's being selected for secretary by the latter when he was made commander-in-chief. When a friend remonstrated with Reed on the step he had taken in accepting this position, he replied: “I have no inclination to be hanged for half treason. When a subject draws his sword

against his prince he must cut his way through if he means afterwards to sit down in safety. I have taken too active a part in what may be called the civil part of opposition to renounce without disgrace the public cause when it seems to lead to danger, and have a most sovereign contempt for the man who can plan measures he has not the spirit to execute."

The books and accounts opened by him in his capacity of secretary bear witness to his neatness and trained ability, while Washington's letters to him during his frequent enforced absence from camp show how great was the commander's reliance on the good judgment and scholarly acquirements of his chosen secretary. The first letter in point is written from the camp at Cambridge, under date of November 20, 1775, and is as follows :

"DEAR SIR: The hint contained in the last of your letters respecting your continuance in my family, in other words, your wish that I could dispense with it, gives me pain. You already, my dear Sir, knew my sentiments on this matter; you cannot but be sensible of your importance to me; at the same time I shall again repeat, what I have observed to you before, that I can never think of promoting my convenience at the expense of your interest and inclination. * * * My mind is now fully disclosed to you, with this assurance sincerely and affectionately accompanying it, that whilst you are disposed to continue with me, I shall think myself too fortunate and happy to wish for a change."

Again, on the 28th of the same month, he writes :

"DEAR SIR: I can truly assure you that I miss you exceedingly, and if an express declaration be wanting to hasten your return, I make it most heartily and with some pleasure. * * * What can your brethren of the law mean, by saying your perquisites, as Secretary, must be considerable? I am sure they have not amounted to one farthing."

The last extract on this subject is written under date of December 15 :

“With respect to what you have said of yourself and situation, to what I have before said on this subject, I can only add, that whilst you leave the door open to my expectation of your return, I shall not think of supplying your place—if ultimately, you resolve against coming, I should be glad to know it, as soon as you have determined upon it.”

The earliest letter that has been preserved of Reed to Washington is written from Philadelphia, whither he had been sent on business connected with the army. Washington already had recommended him for adjutant general in the Continental service, and this is the proposition to which he refers :

“PHILADELPHIA *March 3 1776.*

“MY DEAR GENERAL, I have not been favoured with any Thing from you since my two last but that never makes any Difference in my Writing as your Claims of Friendship & Gratitude upon me are superior to all other. * * * The Congress have acceded to the Proposition respecting myself so that unless some new Event unforeseen & very important should happen I shall be with you this Summer. I must beg your Indulgence till I can get my Family into some convenient Situation & settle my Affairs—In the mean Time I am forwarding your Camp Equipage which I have extended in many small particulars beyond your Order.”

Four days later he writes :

“PHILAD. *March 7, 1776.*

“MY DEAR GENERAL,

* * * * *

“I have taken a House in the Country to which I propose soon to remove my Family & am preparing what is necessary for the Summer. * * * I expect your Tents to be finished this Week. * * *

"Adieu my dear General, should there be any Action or Enterprize God grant it may be a glorious one to you & a happy one for our Country."

On the 15th he writes to congratulate his "dear General" on a prosperous turn in events:

"PHILAD. *March 15, 1776.*

"MY DEAR GENERAL, This Morning your Express arrived with an Account of the interesting Events which have taken Place since this Month began. I beg Leave to congratulate you on Appearances so favourable to the Interests of our Country & your own Character. Not that in my Opinion it was the least clouded by your Inactivity as the Causes were well known, but it is certain that Enterprize & Success give a Brilliance & Lustre which cannot be unacceptable to a good Mind."

An interesting letter to John Hancock, President of Congress, marks the end of his secretaryship and bears witness to his strict sense of justice:

"The Hon'ble Congress having been pleased some Time ago to make an Addition to the Pay of the General's Secretary, upon an Expectation that I should continue in that Appointment, I think it my Duty to acquaint you, that agreeable thereto, I repaired to New York, where I found a Gentleman of Character & Abilities performing the Services of that Office with Satisfaction to the General.

"As my first acceptance of the Office was purely accidental, & occasioned by publick Motives, the Necessity of my Continuance seemed now to cease & induced me to request the General to excuse my farther Attendance, which he was so obliging as to comply with. This & Engagements both of a publick & Private Nature in this Province, & these only, were my Reasons for declining the Service, at the same Time I assured the General that if in the Course of Business my small Abilities could be of any Use, I would on the shortest Notice most chearfully devote myself to it again.

“Having been absent from the General for some Time I considered the Pay of the Office most properly due to those Gentlemen who did the Duty during that Absence. I accordingly with the General’s Approbation divided it between them.”

As adjutant general he met the messenger of Lord Howe when the latter sent a letter to *George Washington, Esqr.*, and refused to transmit it to the commander-in-chief, because it was not properly addressed.

Reed’s active military career began with the series of engagements on Long Island, in August, 1776, while by his knowledge of the country around Trenton and Princeton, gained as a boy and during his college days, he aided materially in the success of the enterprise of that memorable Christmas night and the following January. As an acknowledgment of his services during this campaign, Congress raised him to the rank of brigadier general May 12, 1777. About the same time the executive council of Pennsylvania appointed him to fill the office of chief justice of that State. He declined both appointments, however, preferring to keep himself free to act as a volunteer whenever his services should be needed, and it was in this capacity he took part in the battles of Brandywine, Whitemarsh, Germantown, and Monmouth.

Man’s necessity is often the devil’s opportunity, and it was when Reed was disheartened by his ineffectual appeals to Congress in behalf of our half-clothed and half-starved soldiers, for whose sake he had well nigh impoverished himself, that one of the fiercest temptations of his life assailed him. Ten thousand pounds sterling and any office in the king’s gift were offered him if he would renounce the American cause and use his influence to bring about a reconciliation between the two countries. Without a moment’s hesitation Reed proudly answered, “I am not worth purchasing, but, such as I am, the king of Great Britain is not rich enough to buy me!”

In November of 1778 he was unanimously elected president of the State of Pennsylvania, signed the articles of confederation the same year, and in 1781 was active in suppressing the revolt of the Pennsylvania line. During his presidency he aided in founding the University of Pennsylvania and used his influence for the gradual abolition of slavery and the annulling of the proprietary powers vested in the Penn family. At the expiration of his term of office, in 1781, he resumed his practice, and died on the 8th of March, 1785. He was buried beside his wife in the old Presbyterian burying-ground at the corner of Fifth and Arch streets, Philadelphia.

Reed was succeeded on the 16th of May, 1776, by Robert Hanson Harrison, who served until the 25th of March, 1781. Harrison was born in Maryland in 1745, and was educated for the law. As Washington's secretary he ranked as lieutenant colonel. Lund Washington appears to have been the intermediary in this appointment, for it was through him that the proposition was made to Harrison, and it was Lund who informed the general of Harrison's gratified acceptance.

"MOUNT VERNON, *Octr. 5th, 1775.*

"DEAR SIR:

* * * * *

"I cannot with certainty inform you by this letter whether Mr. Harrison will accept the offer you make him or not; but I can hardly think he or any other American would refuse it." * * *

"MOUNT VERNON, *October 15th, 1775.*

"DEAR SIR: This letter I expect will be delivered to you by Mr. Harrison, who thankfully accepted your invitation."

In 1777 Harrison was appointed by Congress a member of the board of war, but declined, preferring to remain on the staff of the commander-in-chief. On the 10th of March, 1781, he was appointed chief justice of Maryland and quitted

the army on the 25th of the same month. Writing to Washington from Annapolis on the 21st of October following, he says:

“Be pleased to accept my sincere congratulations, My Dear Sir, upon the surrender of Lord Cornwallis.—They are the Offerings of a Heart very warmly attached to Your Excellency & most zealously so to the interest & happiness of the States. This Event, for the wisdom & vigor of the measures leading to it, it is the Voice of all here, is as honorable to You & the Allied Army as it is advancive of & interesting to the Common Cause.”

In 1789 he was appointed judge of the United States Supreme Court, but declined this appointment also. He died in Charles county, Maryland, on the 21st of April, 1790.

On the 21st of June, 1776, Alexander Contee Hanson was appointed assistant secretary and acted in that capacity for several months, until prevented by ill health from rendering further military service, though he continued to enjoy the friendship and confidence of Washington. Hanson was born on the 22d of October, 1749; was a delegate to the convention that ratified the Constitution, in 1788. He declined a United States judgeship, but was chancellor of Maryland from 1789 until his death, in Annapolis, in 1806. Under the title of the *Hanson pamphlets* the Maryland Historical Society has preserved some of his vigorous writings on the political topics of his day.

Next in order of appointment was Colonel Tench Tilghman, who is always known as Washington's *volunteer secretary*. He was born on Christmas day of 1744, at Fausley, his father's plantation, on Fausley creek, a branch of the Saint Michaels river, in Talbot county, Maryland. His father was James Tilghman, a lawyer by profession, who removed from Chestertown, Maryland, to Philadelphia in 1762 and held various posts of trust and honor under the colonial government of Pennsylvania. His mother was the daughter of Tench Francis, senior, an eminent lawyer and attorney-

general of the province of Pennsylvania. Tench Tilghman, one of a family of twelve children and eldest of six boys, after receiving a thorough education under the best masters, entered into business with his uncle, Tench Francis, junior, in Philadelphia. So prosperous was this commercial enterprise that ere the first battle of the Revolution had been fought the partners had secured a modest competency, but the beginning of hostilities was the end of Tilghman's mercantile pursuits. He says:

"Upon the breaking out of the troubles, I came to a determination to share the fate of my country; and that I might not be merely a spectator, I made as hasty a close, as I possibly could, of my commercial affairs, making it a point to collect and deposit in safe hands, as much as would, when times and circumstances would permit, enable me to discharge my European debts, which indeed were all I had."

Fired by the news from Lexington and Concord, the young men of Philadelphia began to fit themselves for what each felt must come sooner or later. Military companies were formed, officers chosen. Of the former, the most conspicuous was *The Ladies' Light Infantry*, called in derision "The Silk Stocking Brigade," of which Tench Tilghman was lieutenant. When this company was reorganized, in 1776, to form part of the Pennsylvania quota, Tilghman was chosen captain, and it became part of the famous *Flying Camp*. During the summer and fall of 1775 he held the important positions of secretary, treasurer, and paymaster to the commission appointed by Congress to treat with the Six Nations. In August of 1776 he became a member of Washington's military family, and from that time until the surrender of Yorktown he was seldom absent from the camp of the commander-in-chief. He shared the fatigues and discouragements of that memorable retreat through the Jerseys; the daring and danger of that midnight crossing of the Delaware; the eclat of the victories at Trenton and Princeton; the sorrow of the defeat at Brandywine and the check at

Germantown; the discomforts, hardships, and privations of the winter quarters at Valley Forge; the masterly plans by which the forces were concentrated at Yorktown, and the glories of its final surrender, which virtually ended the war. To Colonel Tilghman Washington intrusted the pleasing duty of bearing his official communication to Congress of this proud event, making this flattering allusion to his messenger:

“Hon’ble Thomas McKean, President of Congress:

“SIR, * * * Colo. Tilghman, one of my aides-de-camp, will have the honor to deliver these dispatches to your excellency. He will be able to inform you of every minute circumstance which is not particularly mentioned in my letter. His merits, which are too well known to need my observations at this time, have gained my particular attention, and I could wish that they may be honored by the notice of your excellency and Congress.”

This kindly recommendation by the chief was honored by Congress, who ordered that “a horse with his caparisons and a sword be presented by the board of war to Lieut’t Colo. Tilghman.” He was the prototype of the modern “our special correspondent at the seat of war,” sending by express to Congress, at the special request of certain members, a daily letter giving the latest news of our own and the enemy’s movements. Concerning his rank of lieutenant colonel an extract from a letter of Washington’s to Hon. John Sullivan, delegate to Congress, urging that body to settle definitely the rank of certain officers in the Continental service, will be interesting as showing certain commendable traits in Tilghman’s character. Washington writes:

“I also wish, though it is more a matter of private than public consideration, that the business could be taken up on account of Mr. Tilghman, whose appointment seems to depend on it; for if there are men in the army deserving

of the commission proposed for him, he is one of them. This gentleman came out a captain of one of the light infantry companies of Philadelphia, and served in the Flying Camp in 1776. In August of the same year he joined my family, and has been in every action in which the main army was concerned. He has been a zealous servant and slave to the public, and a faithful assistant to me for nearly five years, a great part of which time he refused to receive pay. Honor and gratitude interest me in his favor, and make me solicitous to obtain his commission. His modesty and love of concord placed the date of his expected commission at the first of April, 1777, because he would not take rank of Hamilton and Meade, who were declared aides in order (which he did not choose to be), before that period, although he had joined my family and done all the duties of one from the first of September preceding."

That Tilghman, like many others, suffered from the envy and jealousy of some with whom he came in contact, who tried, though ineffectually, to prejudice the chief against him, may be gathered from a letter written to his brother, who wished to gain permission to go abroad :

"HEAD QUARTERS, NEW WINDSOR,

"12th June, 1781.

"MY DEAR WILLIAM

* * * * *

"It gives me pain to tell you that I cannot, without subjecting myself to censure, interfere in the least, in procuring your recommendations to go to England by the way of France or Holland. I am placed in as delicate a situation as it is possible for a Man to be. I am, from my station, Master of the most valuable Secrets of the Cabinet and the Field, and it might give cause of umbrage and suspicion were I, at this critical Moment, to interest myself in procuring the passage of a Brother to England. Tho' I may know his intentions are perfectly innocent, others may not or will

not. You cannot conceive how many attempts have been made, some time ago, to alarm the General's suspicions, as to my being near his person—Thank God—He has been too generous to listen to them—and the many proofs I have given of my attachment have silenced every malignant whisper of the kind. As I never have given the least handle for censure, I am determined never to do it."

When Washington surrendered his commission as commander-in-chief, at Annapolis, on the 23d of December, 1783, Tilghman was beside him, and, following the example of his chief, resigned his commission and became once more a private citizen. Locating at Baltimore, he again engaged in mercantile pursuits, at first on his own account, but soon after in connection with Mr Robert Morris. In June of 1783 he had married his cousin, Anna Maria Tilghman, daughter of Matthew Tilghman, of Bay Side, Talbot county, Maryland. Two daughters were born to them, but the seeds of a fatal disease had been sown in the father's constitution during that terrible winter at Valley Forge, and on the 18th of April, 1786, in the forty-second year of his age, he passed away and was buried in the plot of ground, no longer used for the interment of the dead, on Lombard street between Green and Paca streets, Baltimore.

The second aid-de-camp to be appointed assistant secretary was James McHenry, of Pennsylvania. He entered the army as surgeon of the 5th Pennsylvania battalion on the 10th of August, 1776, but was taken prisoner at Fort Mifflin on the 26th of September following. He remained a prisoner of war on parole until exchanged on the 5th of March, 1778. Two months later, on the 15th of May, he was chosen assistant secretary by the commander-in-chief. That he longed for a more active participation in the war is shown by the following letter to his commander :

"HEAD QUARTERS, 18th July, 1780.

"SIR: I would beg leave to mention to your Excellency, a matter, in which I feel too much to be longer without

laying it before you. The approaching campaign opening an interesting field, makes me desirous to appear, in a more military character, than that I now hold. I have also had before me for some time past, a prospect of visiting Europe; and especially those places where our interest is most cherished. And as my present character of Secretary, is not in the same estimation, there, as with us, I would therefore request your Excellency that I may be considered as a volunteer. Hitherto, I have acted without pay, and it is my intention to receive none in future, unless some alteration in my circumstances renders it necessary. If I receive your permission, to serve as a volunteer, or accept such a station in the army as may place me wholly, in a military light, I shall be happy, because, in it, I combine, with what I owe myself, that duty proper to my country.

"I have the honor to be with the utmost respect, Your Excellency's

"Most obt. & hble servt.

"JAMES MCHENRY.

"His Excellency
General WASHINGTON."

On the 30th of October, 1780, he was transferred from Washington's to Lafayette's staff, serving as aid-de-camp, with the rank of lieutenant colonel, until the 22d of December, 1781. From 1783 to 1786 he was a member of the Continental Congress, and in 1787 was one of the framers of the United States Constitution. On the 27th of January, 1796, he was again associated with Washington, succeeding Timothy Pickering as Secretary of War and holding that office until the 13th of May, 1800. His death occurred on the 8th of May, 1816.

The last aid-de-camp to be appointed secretary was Jonathan Trumbull, junior, son of Connecticut's famous war governor, whose Christian name is said to have furnished the sobriquet for the United States (Brother Jonathan). Jonathan, junior, was born in Lebanon, Connecticut,

on the 26th of March, 1740. He was a graduate of Harvard and a prominent member of the state legislature for several sessions prior to and at the commencement of the Revolution. During the first three years of the war he was paymaster to the northern department of the army, and on the 8th of June, 1781, was appointed aid-de-camp and secretary to the commander-in-chief. When the position was tendered to him he wrote the following reply :

“LEBANON 27th April 1781.

“DEAR GENERAL Returng. Yesterday from a Journey Eastward as far as Boston on which I had been employed for a Fortnight, I found your Excellency’s Letter of the 16th waiting for me, with a Proposal for my joining your Family in the Capacity of a Secretary. * * * The Idea is so new & unexpected—and my other Engagements (exclusive of my Family, private Business & domestic Concerns) are such as will render it very difficult for me to make a Compliance to your Excellency’s Request—tho’ at the same Time I have to confess that it will give me great Pain, if on full Consideration, I shall find myself obliged to make a Refusal; as my Inclination would lead me to fulfill your every Wish—& be assured Sir!—my Ambition would be highly gratified by so near an Admission to the Person & Confidence of General Washington. * * * On the whole I must beg your Excellency’s Permission for a short Time to consult my own mind & those of my Friends on this subject—and in the meantime suffer me to suggest that your Excellency will be pleased to turn your Mind on some other Person who may eventually be called to this Service—some others I can readily conceive may be found who will perform it with greater Abilities but no one I dare say will accept whose chearfull Readiness & utmost Endeavours to fulfill your Excellency’s Wishes will be greater (if Circumstances shall permit) than mine.”

On the 20th of July, 1783, he writes from Newburgh to Washington, who is absent for a time from headquarters,

giving him the news up to date, and adding the following postscript :

“ P. S. Mrs. Washington not writing, desires me to inform [you] that she is as well as when your Excellency left her.”

His office terminated with the disbanding of the army, 23d of December, 1783. Subsequently he was member of Congress from 1789 to 1795, Speaker of the House during the last four years of the time, United States Senator from 1795 to 1796, lieutenant governor of Connecticut from 1796 to 1798, governor from 1798 to 1809, and died on the 7th of August of that year.

Of these seven military secretaries of the revolutionary period, Richard Varick alone was not an aid-de-camp, but bore the distinctive title of *recording secretary*. He was born in Hackensack, New Jersey, on the 25th of March, 1753, and his family name was originally Van Varick. At the beginning of hostilities he was a practicing lawyer in New York city. Entering the army a captain in McDougall's regiment, he was soon after appointed military secretary to General Schuyler, then in command of the northern division. Later he was made deputy mustermaster general, with the rank of lieutenant-colonel, and served in that capacity until after the surrender of Burgoyne, in October, 1777, when he was appointed inspector general at West Point and aid-de-camp to Benedict Arnold, whose soldierly qualities won his admiration and whose treason came near driving Varick insane. Summarily dismissed from the army by Congress because of his “unhappy connexion with the guilty Arnold,” he was afterward, through the interposition of friends, granted the benefit of a court of inquiry. Pending his trial he wrote to Washington from—

“ ROBINSON'S HOUSE, *October 24th, 1780.*

* * * * *

“As it may be of essential Importance to Me, to be furnished with the Testimony of one of the Gentlemen of Your

Excellency's Family, with respect to my Conduct, on and after the 25th September, & whether the Papers taken on André were in my Hand Writing; I have by this conveyance requested Colo. Hamilton to be so obliging as to send me his by the first Opportunity Least those from Meade & Harrison should not reach me in Season or not be broad enough, with respect to the Papers taken on André."

Exonerated from all complicity in Arnold's infamous scheme, he soon after received a wonderful proof of Washington's thorough belief in his innocence, the chief tendering him the position of recording secretary. His letter of acceptance bears date Albany, May 25, 1781, and is in part as follows:

"I do therefore take this Opportunity of accepting the singular Trust so politely proffered to me & shall deem myself happy if my Services & Attention on this Occasion may be such as to merit Approbation & prove the Propriety of Your Excellency's Choice. I shall set out for Camp in a very few Days, where I can be better informed how soon the Papers will be ready for Transcription & take Measures accordingly. * * * When I was at Poughkeepsie I mentioned the Matter to Governor Clinton & requested his Opinion as to the Practicability of getting proper Assistance at that Place, he informed me that he could recommend at least two Persons who are capable & to be confided in, I believe I shall be able to engage the others in this Place or its Vicinity; on the proper Characters I will advise with Gen'l Schuyler."

From a letter to Jonathan Trumbull, junior, we find that he began his work on the 7th of June, 1781. He adds:

"The Terms the Gen'l proposed were to be on an equal footing with Yourself with Respect to pay & subsistence Money. I wish this to [be] specified, as also that the Pay to Myself & Writers should be in Specie or its equivalent.

Let it be mentioned in particular about the Writers as His Excellency's promise, they now hold me in the Gap.
 * * * The Room in which the Office is kept ought to be paid for by the Public—my Lodging is an Affair of my own. * * * I wish farther to be empowered to give one of the Writers 60 Dollars pr. Mo. as they draw no Rations or any Thing else & I wish one, besides his Ordinary Duty at Office Hours, in the Absence of the Other to Assist me in Examining the Papers, this will justly deserve some Compensation."

By the 19th of July he was ready to report progress to Washington :

"POUGHKEEPSIE *July 19th 1781.*

"DEAR SIR I have the Honor of informing Your Excellency that I arrived at this Place on Saturday the 7th.
 * * * By numbering and digesting into Classes the Copies of Letters & Orders in 1775 & 1776 I found that some essential ones were wanting. * * * I therefore thought it expedient before I employed the Writers, to sort & digest the whole of the Original Letters & Copies for 1775, 1776, 1777 & 1778 & All the other Papers, to find them & such other Copies as thro' hurry were misfiled, that I might not be deemed guilty of Blunders which it was in my Power, by timely Precautions, to prevent. * * * The Variety of Movements & Hands which the Papers have gone thro', have caused many of them to be improperly packed together, so as to require the most exact & unintermitted Attention as well as some Time, to indorse, arrange & digest them in proper Order.

"I flatter myself that this consideration alone, independent of the above Embarrassment, will exculpate me in Your Opinion of a seeming Delay in setting the Writers to Business.—I am, however, happy to inform Your Excellency that I now have the whole in such a State of Forwardness as to enable two Writers to commence in two Days & a third in five Days thereafter. * * * Least any Concern

may take Place with Respect to the Security of the public Papers, I think it proper to inform Your Excellency that I have taken Quarters at Doctor Peter Tappen's an honest Patriot & Bro. in Law to the Genl. where my Charge is perfectly secure & rendered (if possible) more so by its Propinquity to the Governor's Quarters, who is furnished with a Guard. But without this I should not apprehend the least Danger, as the Inhabitants are generally Whigs.

"I heartily wish You success in Your Military Operations & am with the most perfect Respect & Esteem Your Excellency's Most Obliged Obedt. Servt.

" RICHARD VARICK

" His Excellency Genl. WASHINGTON."

In February of 1782 he had a grievance to state :

" POUGHKEEPSIE Feb'y. 7, 1782

* * * * *

"Since my Letter of the 14th Mr. Hughes, one of the Writers who, tho capable, had been frequently too inattentive to the Manner of executing his Duty, took my frequent Reproofs & Directions in Dudgeon & quitted the Service, after having compleated two Volumes (from the 1st Jany. to the 10th Septr. 1779.)—This was the ostensible business ; but the real one was a Disappointment in his Wishes and Expectations to make a *Jobb* of the Business."

From his accounts we glean the names of six " writers "—Mr Zacchæus Sickels, Mr Oliver Glean, Mr Myer, Mr Dunscomb, Mr Hughes (the last three were discharged), and Mr George Taylor, Jr. His labors were ended on the 18th of August, 1783, when the books and papers of his excellency were packed up, ready to be returned, and Varick's appointment terminated on the 23d of December following. Subsequently he was recorder of the city of New York, speaker of the house of assembly, attorney general of the State, mayor of the city, and, with Samuel Jones, was appointed to revise the State laws. He was one of the founders of the

American Bible Society, and on the resignation of John Jay was elected its president. He is described as of imposing presence, being over six feet in height. He died in Jersey City on the 30th of July, 1831.

Passing from the stirring incidents of the camp and following Washington to his dearly loved Mount Vernon, we begin to gather from his diary and correspondence the names and characteristics of a succession of private secretaries. William Shaw, of Virginia, writing to Washington from Dumfries on the 4th of July, 1785, says he hopes his "Excellency will not think £50 sterling per ann. with Bed, Board, Washing, &ca. too great a Demand, as I Can assure you, I have refus'd much greater offers but Prefer Staying with you for a less Sum, as it will entitle me to be in Better Company, & a Genteeler line of Life." He signs himself "Believe me to be with respect Your Excellency's Mo. Obed't Servt.," and adds a postscript: "Please let the Ladies know that there are Black & White Sattin Shoes here, & if they Wish any to Send their Measure, & I shall do myself the Pleasure of getting them." On the 12th of the same month he writes to say that he is sorry the sum he mentioned is thought too much, but will come for whatever Washington thinks his services are worth. Looking through the General's diary, one feels that in his dealings with young Shaw he kept in view the old adage that "all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," for Mr Shaw goes to the races, rides after the hounds, and attends many an "assembly" and "dance" in Alexandria. Two entries in Washington's diary fix the date of his coming and going with accuracy:

"Tuesday 26th July 1785 * * * With Mrs. Washington, Miss Bassett and the two children I dined at Mr. Lund Washington's.—On my return, found Mr. Will Shaw (whom I had engaged to live with me as a Book keeper, Secretary, &ca.) here."

"August, Sunday 13, 1786 * * * Mr. Shaw quitted this family to day."

In 1786 Washington began corresponding with friends in reference to a suitable tutor for his adopted children—George Washington Parke and Miss Nellie Parke Custis—and through General Lincoln hears of Tobias Lear. A letter under date of February 6, 1786, from Washington to Lincoln defines the duties and privileges of the person wanted with accuracy:

“MOUNT VERNON, 6 *February*, 1786.

“MY DEAR SIR * * * Mr. Lear, or any other who may come into my family in the blended characters of preceptor to the children, and clerk or private secretary to me, will sit at my table, will live as I live, will mix with the company who resort to the house, and will be treated in every respect with civility and proper attention. He will have his washing done in the family, and may have his linen and stockings mended by the maids of it. The duties which will be required of him, are generally such as appertain to the offices above mentioned. The first will be very trifling, till the children are a little more advanced; and the other will be equally so, as my correspondences decline (which I am endeavouring to effect) and after my accounts and other old matters are brought up. To descend more minutely into his duties I am unable, because occasional matters may call for particular services; but nothing derogatory will be asked or expected. After this explanation of my wants, I request that Mr. Lear will mention the annual sum he will expect for these services, and I will give him a decided answer by the return of the stages, which now carry the mail and travel quickly. A good hand, as well as proper diction, would be a recommendation on account of fair entries, and for the benefit of the children who will have to copy after it.”

On the 7th of May following Lear writes to Washington that General Lincoln has let him see the letter in which Washington accedes to his request for \$200 per annum, and adds:

"If I find an opportunity of going by Water I shall embrace it immediately and be with your Excellency in about three weeks, but if an opportunity does not offer in a few days I shall set off by the stages, and very probably be at Mount Vernon soon after you receive this. I am with sentiments of the greatest Respect Your Excellency's most Obed't Hum'e Serv't."

Lear was born in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, September 19th, 1762; graduated from Harvard in 1783, and became Washington's private secretary in 1786. He married, for his second wife, the widow of one of Washington's favorite nephews; was generously remembered in the General's will, and has the distinction of having received his last words. The January [1895] number of the *Spirit of '76* states that "in 1798, when Washington accepted the command of the provisional army, Mr Lear was selected as the military secretary, with the rank of colonel," but official data are not at hand to verify this statement. In 1801 he was consul-general at Saint Domingo; from 1804 to 1812, consul-general at Algiers and a commissioner to conclude a peace with Tripoli. At his death, which occurred in the city of Washington, October 10, 1816, he was an accountant in the War Department.

David Humphreys, born in Derby, Connecticut, in 1752, was aid-de-camp to Washington from 1780 to the end of the war. His name appears in the journals of Congress as follows:

"*Resolved*, That an elegant sword be presented, in the name of the United States in Congress assembled, to Colo. Humphreys, an aid-de-camp of General Washington, to whose care the standards, taken under the capitulation of York, were consigned, as a testimony of their opinion of his fidelity and ability and that the board of war take order therein."

He was an honored guest at Mount Vernon for nearly a

year after the return of its master. Upon the organization of the Federal Government he accompanied Washington to New York and acted as his secretary until 1790. Many letters on file in the Department of State bear his signature, in that capacity. In 1789, while on a mission south to treat with the southern Indians, he writes to the President as follows:

“ PETERSBURG *Oct'r 28th 1789.*

“ MY DEAR GENERAL * * * I have taken considerable pains to learn how the persons appointed to offices in the several States are considered by their fellow Citizens; & am happy to assure you that the appointments in general have met with almost universal approbation. The selection of Characters to fill the great Departments has afforded entire satisfaction; particularly in the Judiciary I heard it repeatedly said in Halifax, that the Supreme Court would be the first Court in the world in point of respectability. These things cannot but augur well. * * * I will not intrude any longer on your time, than to assure you, that I am with the most unalterable & perfect friendship my dear general &ca

“ D. HUMPHREYS.

“ To the PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.”

In 1790 he was appointed minister to Portugal, and at the moment of embarking wrote to Washington as follows:

“ NEW YORK *September 1st 1790*

“ MY DEAR GENERAL In taking leave of you, at the moment of your departure, while I strove in vain to check an impulse which I apprehended betrayed too much weakness, I found the burden on my heart choaked the passage of utterance. In that moment a multitude of ideas crowded into my mind. A long separation from one's friends & country under an idea of going into a nation where one is a total stranger, however flattering or useful the object may be which occasions it, is, in some respects, like a voluntary exile. * * * As I was unable to say what I wished to

have said, I thought I would take this occasion of writing a line to you, previous to my leaving the Continent, which might remain as a proof of my gratitude for all your kindness, and a pledge of my honest zeal to justify your indulgent sentiments in my behalf, by the execution of my duty in the best manner my abilities will allow. * * * I have kept this letter open untill the moment in which I should be called to embark. The tide & wind now suffer us to sail. No farther delay is permitted. The last act I shall do on shore, previous to my voyage, will be to assure you, that, of all the Admirers of your character or friends to your person, there is no one who feels a more disinterested & inviolable attachment, than, My dear general

“Your sincere friend & Most obliged Servant

“D. HUMPHREYS.”

His life was a busy one, filled with military, diplomatic, and literary pursuits. He died in New Haven, February 21, 1818.

William Jackson, born in Cumberland, England, March 9, 1759, but brought as an orphan, at an early age, to this country, was liberally educated in the colonies, and entered the army in 1775. He was in active service until 1780, when he was made prisoner at the capture of Charleston. He gained his title of major while an aid-de-camp to the commander-in-chief. In April, 1787, he wrote to Washington, asking his influence to have him appointed secretary to the federal convention, and on the 17th of September following he wrote :

“Major Jackson, after burning all the loose scraps of paper which belong to the Convention, will this evening wait upon the General with the Journals and other papers which their vote directs to be delivered to His Excellency.”

From 1789 to 1793 he was private secretary to the President. In July of 1790, having heard that Mr Otis, secretary

to the Senate, would probably soon resign to take another office, he writes to Washington to bespeak his influence to have him appointed Otis' successor and gives the following reason :

"Several years are past since my affections were given to a Lady in Philadelphia whose name delicacy requires me to leave unconnected with a letter—they were returned and my happiness wanted only the aid of fortune to have been completed. To obtain the consent of friends, whose consent was essential to my happiness, some certainty of income was necessary : but alas, I have not possessed that certainty, and I have hitherto been unhappy. The present object with the assistance of what I might derive from another pursuit, in the recess of Congress, would confirm to me an expectation of happiness dearer to me than all other hopes."

A year later, hearing that the Postmaster General is about to resign, he writes again to Washington and wishes to submit himself as successor, but adds :

"Could I believe, Sir, that your approbation of my wish (should I be so happy as to obtain it) could be construed into an act of partiality towards a person of your family—interesting as the completion of this wish is to my happiness—I would not desire it—No, Sir, I would not consent that, in this only instance, you should be supposed to depart from that impartial justice, which characterises all your actions and has given unlimited confidence to your administration."

In 1795 he married Elizabeth Willing, of Philadelphia, the lady of his choice. The same year, while Washington was deprived of the services of Mr Dandridge because of his severe illness, Jackson wrote to the President :

"[PHILADELPHIA] PINE STREET No. 67—

"August 25, 1795.

* * * * *

"Presuming that in the absence of Mr Dandridge, and under the pressure of public business, you might possibly

have occasion for that kind of assistance which I should be capable of rendering—I beg leave to entreat, if such assistance can be useful, that you will command my best services while you continue on your present visit to Philadelphia.

“As I am waiting the issue of some arrangements before I enter upon my plans of private business, my time is, at present unoccupied.—And my heart, head and hands cannot be more gratefully employed than in a disinterested demonstration of the perfect esteem and affectionate attachment, with which I am, Sir, Your most obliged and faithful servant.”

In 1796 Jackson was appointed surveyor of the port of Philadelphia. He was secretary to the Society of the Cincinnati for twenty-eight years and delivered the funeral oration upon Washington in Philadelphia. He died in 1828, his wife surviving him for thirty years.

Bartholomew Dandridge, of Virginia, nephew to Mrs Washington, writes from Baltimore, July 14, 1792, to Colonel Vanhorne, “By order of the President of the United States, I beg to inform you,” &c, showing that he had been added to the list of secretaries. In May, 1796, after a severe spell of illness, he writes to the President from Greenbriar Court House:

“In case you do not wish to give me my place in your service, I may endeavour to obtain one somewhere or other. In the last event, I must beg of you to enclose me a certificate of the time I lived with you & of my conduct during that time. As I am sure you will do this with strict justice, it will be serviceable to me. You may obtain many who are in some respects more capable of doing your business, but I can truly say you will not find one who will be more faithful to your interest, according to my ability.”

He ends by suggesting that if the President does not need him as a secretary, he should be glad to be employed as an agent for disposing of Washington’s lands on the Ohio.

In March of 1797 Washington wrote for Dandridge such a testimonial as he asked the year before. He speaks in high approbation of Dandridge's conduct during the six years he had been a member of his family, refers to the new career opening before the young man, and reminds him, "but I am sure you will never forget that, without virtue & without integrity, the finest talents & the most brilliant accomplishments can never gain the respect or conciliate the esteem of the truly valuable part of mankind."

George Washington Craik, of Virginia, son of Dr James Craik, whom Washington in his will calls "my compatriot in arms, my old and intimate friend," was one of several youths who, bearing the general's name, were in part educated at his expense. A letter is on file in the Department of State, bearing date November 9, 1796, written from Philadelphia, and signed by Craik as secretary to the President, showing that he had been selected to fill the position during Dandridge's illness.

As early as 1785 Washington wrote to Tench Tilghman concerning a Mr Rawlins:

"MOUNT VERNON 29th Aug't 1785.

"DEAR SIR * * * As I seem to be in the habit of giving you trouble, I beg the favor of you to cause the inclosed letter to be delivered to Mr Rawlins—I leave it open for your perusal—my reason for it is, that thereby seeing my wants, you would be so obliging as to give me your opinion of Mr Rawlins with respect to his abilities and diligence as a workman—whether he is reckoned moderate or high, in his charges—and whether there is much call, at this time, for a man of his profession at Baltimore—for on this, I presume, his high or moderate terms will greatly depend."

As Albin Rawlins did not apply for the position until 1798, the first may have been the elder brother to whom he refers in his application. On the 26th of January, 1798,

writing to Washington from Hanover Court House and offering himself as secretary, he states that General Spotswood had told his (Rawlins') brother that Washington was in need of such a person. He asks \$150 per annum, and adds that he can get a recommendation from any gentleman in Hanover or Caroline of his acquaintance, and signs himself, "I am honor'd Sir Y'r Ob't Serv't," but the *honor'd* is added with a caret and is evidently the result of an after-thought. There was some delay in his getting the position, and he seems to have been a young man of "affairs," for he always refers to important private business he should like the time to attend to. He was evidently proud of his penmanship, for he adds a postscript to his last letter, stating, "The letters you received from me were of my own writing." He sets the date of his advent at Mount Vernon as March 20, 1798.

Of the military and private secretaries given above, none but Lear seems to have used his office as a distinctive title, for during Washington's administrations he always signed his official letters, "Tobias Lear, Secretary to the President of the United States."—[*Columbia Historical Society, January 7, 1895.*]